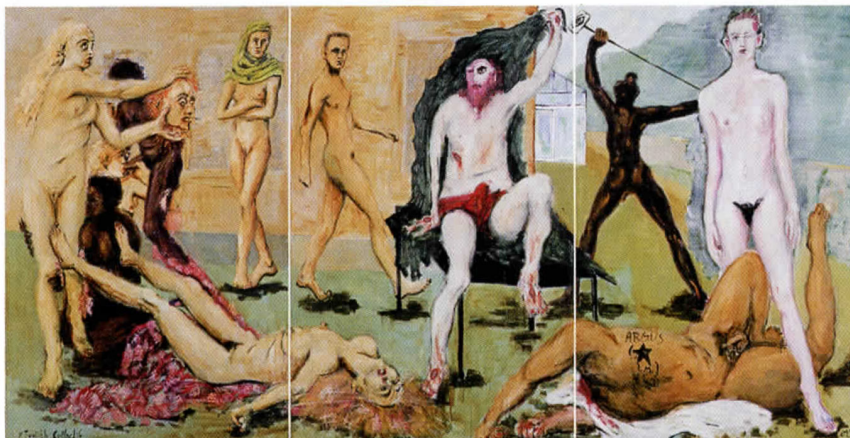


Galerie Daniel Templon Brussels

JAN VAN IMSCHOOT

ARTFORUM, juin 2016



Jan Van Imschoot, *La création d'un paon (Argumentation)* (The Creation of a Peacock [Argument]), 2016, triptych, oil on canvas, each 77 × 51 ¼".

recent acts of terrorism in Brussels. When it became clear that the former assaults were planned and organized in the now world-infamous Molenbeek municipality of Brussels, the policy makers of France were lightning fast with their judgment. Van Imschoot may be alluding to this dynamic, but he is clever enough not to paint a mere political pamphlet; instead he uses the story of the ancient Greek myth to comment on contemporary society. Yes, we recognize the three goddesses, but here they stand before the Belgian tricolor; in a banner painted on top of the image is written the not-to-be-misinterpreted statement *EUROPA IST LA FRANCE. L'EUROPE C'EST BELGIË, LA BELGIQUE, BELGIËN. EUROPA IS DEUTSCHLAND*. The apple of discord of Greek mythology can be seen as the exact opposite of the Belgian national motto, *Eendracht maakt macht/L'union fait la force* (Strength lies in unity).

In two paintings from 2016, Van Imschoot depicts the controversial French author Louis-Ferdinand Céline. *Compter les feuilles de fleurs* (Counting the Leaves of Flowers) is a Velázquez-style portrait, complete with a deep-red velvet coat trimmed with a brilliant-white lace frill, while *Juger le mort vers l'aube* (Judging the Dead Toward Dawn) shows Céline facing a menorah, a clear comment on his contemptible anti-Semitism. These two extremely different ways of portraying the same figure, on the one hand expressing sympathy for the writer by showing him as a hapless aristocrat, on the other hand condemning him for his execrable politics, suggest Van Imschoot's range as an artist. Another of the show's highlights, the diptych *Sauf le dimanche on les mange (la naissance de Zeus)* (Except Sundays We Eat Them [The Birth of Zeus]), 2015, with its Rubenesque painterly bravura, affirms his sheer virtuosity. But it is the weird and puzzling *L'adoration de François pour Judith*, 2014, that remains perhaps the most compelling of the show's fourteen works. Here we see a voluptuous recumbent naked woman with a man's head on a plate beside her. In a surreal twist, the man himself doesn't seem to mind his disembodied state: He is calmly enjoying a last cigarette. Van Imschoot, a master of irony and allusion, uses classical subjects to produce multilayered pictorial commentaries on contemporary topics, rewriting history from his own oblique viewpoint.

—Jos Van Den Bergh

BRUSSELS

Jan Van Imschoot GALERIE DANIEL TEMPLON

Jan Van Imschoot is an artist's artist, admired and respected by his colleagues but, regrettably, little known to a broader audience. The fact that he has opted for a kind of voluntary exile in the countryside of northern France doesn't help either. But he is one of the best Flemish painters of his generation. For his latest exhibition, "*Le jugement de Pâris à Bruxelles*" (The Judgment of Paris in Brussels), he took a cue from Greek mythology. Paris was the Trojan shepherd prince who had to judge which of the Greek goddesses Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite deserved the golden apple with the inscription "For the fairest one." The scene has been painted many times through the centuries, most notably by Rubens; as late as 1908 Renoir created his version. For Van Imschoot, the Judgment of Paris has a completely different meaning. By adding the words *à Bruxelles*, Van Imschoot makes clear that he uses ancient stories to talk about today, perhaps implying that in his version Paris is the city, whose inhabitants judge the Belgian capital—at the same time alluding to James Ensor, who did something similar by putting the Belgian capital in place of Jerusalem in his 1888 painting *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*.

The large-scale triptych that lent the show its title was produced in January, soon after the November 2015 Paris attacks yet before the